

It has been such an honor and a great joy to serve with CORY in the U.S. Senate. I am certain he will continue to serve his State and his country, and I wish him and his family all the best. Thank you, CORY, for all you have done.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Missouri.

Mr. BLUNT. Madam President, well, some farewell speeches are different than others. I think this farewell speech should very much be just a momentary pause for us to think about what comes next.

CORY Gardner is incredibly accomplished. He has been good for the Senate. He has been great with his colleagues, and he has been, beyond that, even more constantly focused on Colorado.

He has become, for me, a valued personal friend. Our families, for whatever reason, from almost the first time we spent any time together, sort of gravitated toward each other and continued to do things together. And why not? Jaime is great. CORY is that beam of sunshine that Senator BENNET and Senator COLLINS both have talked about, 365 days a year. He is optimistic. He is determined. He is realistic. Those are all three pretty doggone good characteristics for a successful legislator. He also continues to figure out, OK, that didn't work and what can we do that makes that work in some other way, to be determined to get the job done, to be realistic about how an obstacle can be in the way and understand how to come together and make all those things work.

Now, Senator COLLINS, particularly, mentioned that long list of truly great legislative fights that CORY has successfully led in. One of them we worked together on has been the effort to be sure that people who weren't able to get broadband—people in rural areas and people in urban areas who maybe had broadband but couldn't afford it. By the way, I think that is the next big fight about broadband. It is not just accessibility but also, even though it may be running right by where you live, how do we work in ways that assure you are part of it.

In little towns like I grew up in or CORY grew up in, it is the difference in whether you can compete or not. We have seen that so dramatically in the last few months, where kids going to school without the ability to have that access were dramatically hampered by that. People who couldn't use broadband for mental health or telehealth and people who just couldn't live where they prefer to live because they didn't have the connectedness they need to have are hampered by that. That is a fight that CORY has been in the middle of, and he understood it only maybe as you would understand it if half of your State is vertical and the other half is horizontal. You have got to figure out how to get the connectedness you would like to have.

The second century of the National Park System, one of the truly great American miracles, will be dramatically different than it would have been otherwise because of the legislation that CORY led on. In thinking about the future of that system and thinking about the future of the country, I remember one of the first stories I heard CORY tell, after he got here, in a small group of people. I think his son Thatcher was headed out the door that he wasn't supposed to be going out, and CORY said: That reminds me of one of my speeches late in the campaign. I was done. I thought we were all done. I look around, and Thatcher's shoes are still on the platform, even though Thatcher shouldn't have ever been on the platform.

And as CORY goes back to pick up Thatcher's shoes, he holds them up and says: This is why I am running. This is why I am running—for this little pair of shoes and all the other pairs of shoes that represent the future.

I think CORY has done an incredible job here focusing on not just the present but the future. Frankly, as Senator BENNET said, I am personally interested in seeing what comes next in the future of a person and a family who have so much to offer and are willing to offer it in service to others.

This is a day that I am ready to look and see what the next chapter of the Gardner story looks like and I think it is going to be optimistic and I think CORY will be smiling all the way through it.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BENNET. Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. BLACKBURN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF NATHAN A. SIMINGTON

Ms. CANTWELL. Madam President, I come to the floor today to urge my colleagues to vote against the nomination of Nathan Simington to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission.

We definitely want the FCC to focus on commonsense consumer protections, universal broadband, and the survival of our news and local journalism industry as it faces unbelievable and unfair competition and practices by the tech sector, and we also want to make sure that the next President of the United States also gets to choose their member and representation to the FCC.

The Senate has a tradition of confirming Commission nominees in pairs to ensure equality on both sides of the aisle. I think moving this nominee without that democratic paring is contrary to what we have usually operated under in good governance.

Every Member of this body should be concerned about setting a precedent

and what it will mean in the future if we don't have essential consumer protections and oversight in this important institution.

We need high-quality, affordable broadband for the underserved and the unserved. That includes Tribal country.

We need to make sure that we are working hard as a result of the pandemic and for people to understand that broadband is now essential to our healthcare, to being able to work, and certainly to the education of our children. According to the AP, 16 percent of families with children have no access to broadband, and we need to make sure that all students have the tools for distance learning.

We need to make sure that Washingtonians have access to broadband for healthcare centers and clinics and to make sure that their initial contacts can be done online, just to help us in fighting the pandemic.

Especially, we need to preserve a free and open internet that is not divided into haves and have-nots.

The innovation economy is so important to my State, but it is important to the entire United States, and we need to have nominees who will fight for these policies, to get them implemented. That is why it is important that we look at FCC Commissioners.

Mr. Simington was before our Commerce Committee. We had another nominee whom the White House abruptly, unexpectedly pulled from its renomination—Commissioner O'Rielly—just days after the committee reported that nomination to the Senate, allegedly because he spoke his mind and because he did not agree with the President of the United States. Mr. Simington was nominated instead just a few weeks later, coming from NTIA, which asks the FCC to issue rules.

It raises questions in my mind about the White House's choice in Mr. Simington, particularly given these issues as it relates to the FCC and key responsibilities. I have questions about his neutrality and independence on issues before the Commission and about whether he aggressively and actively sought the media attention to personally and explicitly direct pressure onto the FCC. This involvement might sound insignificant or just partisan to some, but it is so important for the FCC to continue to play an important and independent role from the President of the United States.

So I hope we will not pass the Simington nomination. But I am emphasizing to my colleagues that the President will deserve his nominee as well, and I hope our colleagues will move quickly to confirm them once they are nominated.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Madam President, I also wanted to take a couple of minutes to discuss action that all of us have been working on on a bipartisan and bicameral basis, and that is the action that has now resulted in the National Defense Authorization Act which we will be taking up

but which is certainly being considered in the House of Representatives today.

The reason this is so important to emphasize today is that in this legislation will be the Coast Guard bill and recognition of the fact that we truly are an Arctic nation.

Well, some of you may have said: Well, I think we already got geography; we knew we were an Arctic nation. But this is the first time that we will be authorizing a fleet of six icebreakers for the United States of America.

Some people think: Well, why is that important? What is so important about icebreakers? Well, certainly to the Northwest Passage and the ability to move cargo and to move people and to new transportation routes, it is very important.

When you look at where we are in the United States of America with an icebreaking fleet, we don't compete with other nations that have been able to access and transverse those waterways because they have somebody who can clean the waterway and make it safe and secure. That is why we need, in the United States, to have an icebreaking fleet beyond the capacity we have today, which is two vessels but basically not the full capacity of those two vessels.

This is why it is so important for us to put the money and investment into a program to get us icebreakers so that we, too, can look at this northern waterway and passage and say to the United States of America and to the world community: Yes, we will be in the Arctic as well.

My colleagues on both sides of the aisle realize that this is a very bipartisan issue, that it is a national security issue, and that it is an environmental issue. It is about us and making sure that we communicate.

I have also supported additional language about an Arctic shipping Federal advisory committee. A committee made up of representatives from Federal agencies, including the Coast Guard and the Department of Defense, the Secretary of Transportation, and others would be part of a process to ensure that our Arctic efforts are better coordinated and impactful.

So I hope that my colleagues will look favorably on this legislation.

We all know how important the Coast Guard is to our Nation and an example of that icebreaking capacity, but there are other aspects of this Coast Guard bill that we are also proud of—making sure that it works more robustly with fishermen on fishing safety; doing more to examine the impacts of tar sands; making sure that our orca population is saved from noise impact and further reducing that impact on our orca population; and instituting new reforms within the Coast Guard to really help empower women, to make significant investment in the 40 percent of the workforce of the Coast Guard that are women and to make sure they have what they need—vital childcare opportunities for Coast

Guard families—and to make sure there is zero tolerance in the approach for any kind of sexual assault or sexual harassment.

So with these improvements over all, I would like to thank Chairman WICKER, Senator SULLIVAN, and Senator MARKEY for working on all of these issues. I want to thank Senator MURKOWSKI, as I said, for the Arctic Shipping Federal Advisory Committee and many people who are helping us get to this point, to say not only do we recognize geographically we are an Arctic nation, but we are going to do something about it by making sure we have the capacity on this waterway to be heard and seen and to help the commerce that is going to emerge from the new developments in the Arctic.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. LANKFORD. Madam President, four different times in the last 4 months, we have had votes on this floor to talk about COVID relief. There is a real need to be able to give relief to a lot of people in my State, and, quite frankly, in States around the country.

There are individual items that need to be done that are unfinished. I think we need to actually finish them. We have this week and next week to finish the task at hand. We have 12 appropriations bills. We have a national defense authorization. But in my State, people want to know most what is going to happen with COVID relief. Where is that going to go?

Well, apparently, now we can actually have the debate. After the election was over, Speaker PELOSI announced that she was ready to actually negotiate the bill now that the election was finished. Well, great. Folks in my State have actually been waiting because four times in the last 4 months we brought up bills that were serious bills to be able to actually debate this out and to get the aid that is needed to be done, starting with additional money for distribution for vaccines.

The first vaccine will come on market by this Friday. It will be in arms by this weekend or at the latest, Monday, in my State, in Oklahoma.

As I visit with the people in my State who are in charge of the distribution, they have a terrific plan that they are engaged in to work with healthcare providers across the State to give them first access. For these folks who have been living in PPE for months and months and months, to now have the opportunity to get a vaccine will be a tremendous gift to them. It is incredibly important that this happen.

I do want to congratulate the folks in the science community, the folks who are at Operation Warp Speed in the White House, and so many other individuals who worked so incredibly hard to take a vaccine from first identification of the virus to a vaccine in 11 months. That is remarkable speed to get something done, though I have read recently that the New York Times is now putting out this quiet little accusation that the Trump administration didn't buy enough of the Pfizer vaccine, and the rest of the world is going to get it. The Times just conveniently leaves out that the administration actually purchased 700 million doses of the vaccine from multiple different manufacturers very early on, taking the appropriate risk to say that we don't know which one is going to be successful, so let's try to purchase from all of them, not knowing if six of them will be successful or if one of them will be successful. It was the right strategy then. It remains the right strategy.

In addition to the fact that the Pfizer vaccine is coming out first—which we are all very grateful for—it is 95 percent accurate as far as setting aside the virus. It is 100 percent effective against severe outbreaks of the virus. It is a remarkable vaccine, but it has to be stored at negative 70 degrees. There are very few places in my State and in many other States that have an ultracold freezer that maintains that. It is a great vaccine, but it is limited in the way that you can actually distribute it quickly.

There is a Moderna vaccine that is coming a week later that we will actually have twice as much of, but it doesn't require the same ultracold storage.

So this first round of vaccines will be coming to my State by this weekend, another round of vaccines from another manufacturer by next weekend, and by the end of this year—in just the next few weeks—we will have 20 million people who will get vaccinated.

That is a great start, but, clearly, there are another 300 million people to go. By the time that we get to the end of February, we will have 100 million people who will have been vaccinated, and that doesn't even count the additional vaccines that are coming online.

The Johnson & Johnson vaccine is a single-dose vaccine. It should be online in February. That is very significant to us because that will also provide us tens of millions of additional individuals who can be vaccinated. We could very well be completely vaccinated as a country by the time we get to this summer. We could be completely vaccinated with the most vulnerable in our population—everyone in our healthcare, every single nursing home, every single skilled nursing, every single assisted living, and all those with high-risk conditions like Parkinson's and Alzheimer's and individuals with diabetes and heart disease—those individuals could be completely vaccinated